

# Worm Wranglers

Grade

3

Topic: Waste  
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Duration: 45 minutes

*Students will learn how to set up and maintain a worm composter.*

## **Curriculum Expectations**

- 3s110: Identify living things found in the soil
- 3s111: Demonstrate awareness of the importance of recycling organic materials in soils
- 3e63: Contribute ideas appropriate to the topic in group discussion and listen to the ideas of others
- 3m47: Estimate, read, and record temperature to the nearest degree Celsius

## **Background Information**

Worms are excellent for composting scraps from lunches. The best species for composting are Red Wigglers. They can be purchased from garden centres, worm farms or bait shops. They could also be shared from an existing composter once the wriggle of worms is big enough to split the population.

There is a fine line between drowning and drying out the worms. Damp is somewhere in between and a check everyday at lunch when putting in waste materials allows for a higher function and survival rate for the worms.

Feeding the worms takes some daily participation on behalf of the class. Make a shallow impression in the bedding and put in the table scraps. Scraps should be finely chopped before putting in the wormery. "Worm chefs" could be a new job to add to the board as food prep for your worms. Worms can't eat large chunks so the smaller they are cut up, the better.

Worm chef menu:

Choice A: Cores, peels, pits and little green bits; or

Choice B: All fruit and vegetable peelings, leaves, grass and plant cuttings.

## **Accountability**

Teachers and students will be aware of the needs of worms and how they can help in soil creation.

## **Teacher Notes**

1. Materials: compost bin, red wigglers, bedding materials, 3 to 4 pairs of kitchen gloves, scissors, bowl for collecting food scraps, poster of what will be collected.
2. Discuss what can be done with scrap food waste from recess and lunch.
3. Set up the composter. They need a container that will be cool (between 13 and 25 degrees Celsius), damp (a plant mister will work) and dark (short visits with the worms is fine but the lid has to go back on securely). At the start of your wormery you will need a bin half full of bedding. Bedding is a mixture of soil and shredded newspaper. The bin also needs to

have hole in the bottom for excess water drainage, a tray underneath to collect the excess water and a lid with air holes. Fine nylon mesh over the holes in the top and bottom of the bin prevents the worms from escaping.

4. Train students on how to monitor the waste from lunches, prepare the menu for the worms, and how to keep the wriggle of worms alive.
5. "Visiting" composters can be made from small clear plastic pop bottles and covered with dark paper. Visiting worms can be pets on desks so they can watch the creation of good soil fertilizer. Mesh screening is important to keep worm Houdini's from escaping.

### ***Home Extension***

As the colony of worms grows and prospers, worms can be split off from the colony and shared with interested families. Worm groups can go home for weekends for visits so families can get used to the idea without the expense and space of starting and not liking. Students could report how the visits went and share what the worms ate while visiting the family

### ***Lesson comments***

What did your students find?

Who did they tell?

What creative menus did they come up with?